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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SANAA 002501

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [IZ](#) [KDEM](#) [PTER](#) [YM](#) [DEMOCRATIC REFORM](#) [HUMAN RIGHTS](#)

SUBJECT: DFM NOMAN DISCUSSES BMENA, IRAQ, PRESS FREEDOMS
WITH DCM

REF: SANAA 2411

Classified By: DCM Nabeel Khoury for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (C) Summary. On September 21 Deputy Foreign Minister Mustafa Noman discussed with DCM the BMENA Forum for the Future Summit, ROYG support for the IIG, and recent Presidential statements and actions to rein in the Yemeni press. Noman also offered condolences for the murder of American hostage Armstrong in Iraq. End Summary.

BMENA Forum for the Future Summit -- Not in Sanaa

2. (C) Deputy Foreign Minister Noman immediately raised the ROYG's offer to host the BMENA Forum for the Future Summit (reftel). DCM responded that, although a final determination has not been made, it is unlikely that the Summit will be in Sanaa. Clearly displeased, Noman stressed that the ROYG would be extremely frustrated to see the Summit hosted by another state after President Saleh had "taken a high risk" by attending the Sea Island Summit. Noman expressed concern that "those who were against the President's participation" in the G-8 initiative to promote reform in the region might use this to influence Saleh to change course.

3. (C) DCM told Noman that Yemen's G-8 BMENA participation was well regarded at the highest levels of the USG and advised that the ROYG not waste the opportunity to be a leader of dynamic change in the region over the issue of who hosts the meeting, adding that the decision of where to hold the meeting should not be interpreted as a weakening of USG support for the ROYG. Noman nodded, but stressed that he understands the "Yemeni psychology" and expected many in the ROYG would indeed take it personally. DCM responded that it was in Yemen's national interests to continue to play an active role in the BMENA G-8 process. (Note: Last minute requests from the ROYG to host conferences and receive high-level visitors are common. The January Sanaa conference was organized at the last minute and, while successful, would have been strengthened with concerted long-term planning. End Note).

Noman Condemns "Horrendous Act" Against American

4. (C) Turning to Iraq, Noman offered the ROYG's condolences for the beheading of American hostage Eugene Armstrong in Iraq. "It is a horrendous act, and our hearts are with the family and friend of the victim and the American people." DCM thanked Noman for his kind words.

Yemeni political and media support for IIG

5. (C) Characterizing the recent visit of IIG Foreign Minister Zebari as an important first step, DCM said the ROYG could do more to provide political support for the IIG. The message coming from the ROYG, noted DCM, should be one of encouragement for the political transition taking place in Iraq. Instead, DCM pointed out, official newspaper "al Thawra" continues to use the term "resistance" in referring to terrorist and criminal elements in Iraq. These groups, he said, kill ten times more Iraqis than westerners and hurt the Iraqi economy by making investment in Iraq life threatening. DCM also objected to the continued reference to coalition forces as "the occupation."

6. (C) Noman agreed that there is no true "resistance" movement in Iraq. As for the tone of al Thawra, he said, it represents a sentiment in Yemen and the region. No one really controls the Yemeni press, the DFM continued, "I will pass the message to the President, and see what I can do to get them to stop using these terms."

ROYG Campaign Against the Press?

7. (C) DCM raised USG concerns over the arrest of as-Shura newspaper editor Khaiwani for printing articles "humiliating to the person of the head of state" (septel). DCM

underscored his hope that this incident was not part of a trend. "Personally," replied Noman, "I think this arrest was a mistake," adding that he believed Khaiwani would be released within days.

What is Saleh Saying?

18. (C) On related matters, DCM highlighted President Saleh's recent statements threatening the press and calling attention to FSN employees. (Note: In one speech Saleh warned the press that journalists covering the rebellion in Sa'da may be charged with treason for questioning his actions. In another the president said "We know who is paying papers," and criticized, "those who hang around the doors of embassies and talk about democracy," adding, "these people are the same ones whose sons and daughters (are) recruited inside the American Embassy and they are the ones who say 'death to America.'" End Note).

19. (C) Noman attributed Khaiwani's arrest and Saleh's warnings to the press as reactions to the painful military episode this summer in Sa'da, rejecting the notion that the ROYG was implementing a systematic policy to roll-back press freedoms. He predicted that, come October and Ramadan, a calmer approach would prevail.

KRAJESKI